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# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3604

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November 3, 2006

The Honorable Ban Ki-Moon  
United Nations Secretary-General Elect  
Room S-3800, United Nations Plaza  
First Avenue at 46th Street  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Secretary-General Elect Ban Ki-Moon:

Congratulations on your election to become the next Secretary General of the United Nations. We look forward to working with you as you begin this exciting new opportunity in your public service career. I want to take this opportunity to discuss with you a roadmap for restoring credibility to the U.N. As you may be aware, a recent Luntz-Maslansky poll reported that three-fourths of Americans believe the U.N. is no longer effective and needs more accountability. Only 31% of Americans believe the U.S. gets good value for the over \$5.3 billion we contribute to the U.N. annually, and 71% want to reduce our financial contributions.

Despite this public sentiment, I believe that strong leadership at the U.N. could help restore credibility to the institution. We live in a dangerous era where acts of terror have become commonplace, threats by maniacal tyrannies will soon be backed by nuclear capabilities, easily cured diseases are ravaging helpless populations, and genocide threatens whole population groups. The world is in desperate need of an international body where free and responsible nations can stand together to confront and overcome these grave threats to global security and a sustainable peace.

During the past few decades, there has been appalling mismanagement and corruption at the U.N., as well as missed opportunities for reform, including failure to stop genocide in the Balkans, Rwanda, and the Sudan, the inability to disarm Hezbollah terrorists after three decades in southern Lebanon, the Oil for Food Program which became one of the largest financial scandals in history, the more recent Peacekeeping procurement scandals, and many others.

This doesn't have to be the end of the story. Your election marks a great opportunity for a change of course. I'm confident that we share the goal of an international body that is effective at uniting free people to confront tyranny and insecurity and to broker peace and lasting resolution to conflict. To that end, I respectfully propose the following suggestions to start to restore the confidence of fair-minded observers of the U.N.:

## 1. **Open the books.**

- a) **Shine public light on U.N. financial data.** Transparency is the first and most important step to reforming the United Nations. Transparency not only exposes the good and the bad at an agency, but it has preventive power to change behavior in advance by creating an expectation of public accountability among employees, contractors and other partners. As you may know, in my role as Chairman of the U.S. Senate Federal Financial Management subcommittee, I have been working with the U.N. to bring greater transparency to the U.N. Capital Master Plan (CMP), as a first step in a broader transparency effort founded on a public website where ALL procurement (not just the CMP) would be posted. We have been given many assurances for over a year, but, so far, no such transparency has been forthcoming, either for the CMP or for a broader scope. According to a recently enacted law (PL 109-282), all recipients of U.S. funding, including the U.N., will be required to post their contracting and subcontracting information for fiscal year 2007 and each fiscal year thereafter by January 1, 2008.
- b) **Retain the Procurement Fraud Task force.** This body is currently investigating over 200 reports of corruption. The U.N. should ensure this group continues its important work, and then publicly releases its un-redacted findings.
- c) **Release Oil For Food documents to the public.** There has not been a single U.N. official indicted, let alone arrested, for involvement in this multi-billion dollar scam—not even those tied to convicted Saddam Hussein money-runner, Tongsun Park. The U.N. should call upon the Independent Inquiry Committee to make publicly available the complete archive of the Oil For Food investigation documents. The unspoken assumption is that these documents are soon to be transferred to the U.N. where they will be locked away from public scrutiny. Surely we can agree that such a cover-up would be highly inappropriate. These files should be released without redactions to the public.
- d) **Make public the Secretary General financial disclosure.** While the Secretariat has made initial steps towards accountability by requiring top U.N. officials to make financial disclosures to the U.N. Ethics Office, the Secretary General is inexplicably exempt. The Secretary General should not only be required to comply with the financial disclosure rules of his subordinates, but the U.N. should make all senior U.N. officials' financial disclosures available to the public. There should also be a prohibition on U.N. employees obtaining personal financial benefits, such as cash awards from member states, in the course of their official, U.N. business. To ensure the independence and credibility of this oversight, the U.N. should award a contract with a private sector firm to review financial disclosure forms for *all* U.N. officials and then publicly release the forms.

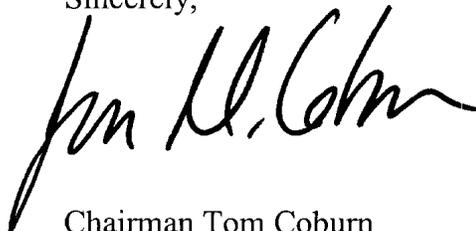
## 2. **Clean-up of “low-hanging fruit” in financial management.**

- a) **Prohibit subsidization of U.N. employees.** The U.N. currently permits member states, NGOs and other organizations to subsidize the salary, housing, and other personal expenses of U.N. employees. This practice should be prohibited as it creates the possibility of conflicts of interest and other ethics breaches.
  - b) **Eliminate unaccountable trust funds.** There are several trust funds and other financial accounts under the direct control of the Secretary General. These U.N. entities are worth hundreds of millions of dollars and are created by direct donations from member states, companies, and endowments from wealthy individuals. However, they operate without the oversight and accountability of the 5<sup>th</sup> Committee or any independent oversight body. The Secretariat should eliminate all unaccountable sources of income—including trust funds, foundation grants, and private/public partnerships—that do not go through the normal appropriations process, are not subject to independent U.N. oversight, and whose budgets are not accessible to member states. The first step in this process should be complete, public disclosure of all funds under the direct or indirect control of the Secretary General.
  - c) **Eliminate \$1 a year salaries.** Since the Oil for Food scandal went public, the U.N. Secretariat has sustained so-called “\$1 a year” employment salaries with U.N. officials who “retired” after being implicated in the scandal-ridden program. There can be no other explanation for this other than the U.N. is inappropriately seeking to shield these former employees with the diplomatic immunity that comes with still being “on salary.” These former employees should instead be lead suspects in any serious investigation of corruption. The Secretariat should eliminate this arrangement that at best appears inappropriate and at worst obstructs justice.
3. **Define terrorism.** The greatest threat to global peace and security is terrorism, yet the U.N. has still not established a definition. Once legitimately defined, the U.N. should not continue accrediting advocacy groups who legitimize terrorism as a viable option.
  4. **Confront nuclear proliferation.** The U.N. should seek to *delegitimize* tyrannies in pursuit of nuclear capabilities rather than *legitimize* them, e.g. by appointing their delegates to posts such as the vice-chair of the U.N. Conference on Disarmament or the vice-chair of the General Conference at the International Atomic Energy Agency.
  5. **Return to the U.N. charter’s job description of the Secretary General.** Article 97 of the U.N. Charter says the Secretary General is the “chief administrative officer” of the United Nations—not the “chief diplomat of the world.” To be able to confront the desperate need for reform at the U.N., the new Secretary General needs to focus on being a manager and not a chief negotiator or some other diplomatic role. The U.N. Secretary General is not a head of state, nor is the Secretariat the lead among member states, but rather the administrative body allowing for member states to communicate effectively.

6. **Appoint a special advisor to the Secretary General on anti-Semitism in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.** Despite the creation of the new Human Rights Council, this body, while ignoring undeniable human rights violations in places like the Sudan and Burma, has only issued two resolutions during its first, second, and two special sessions. Both of these resolutions leveled accusations against Israel, one of the only democracies in the Middle East. This Council has also made 12 separate reports on the United States—more than any other nation. Although investigations exposing possible human rights violations in free and open democracies is *understandably* a much *easier* task, these nations have mechanisms already that duplicate this role, including a free press and uncorrupted judicial system. In fact, it is precisely these institutions which make it easier to investigate potential problems in free and open democracies. As a result, there is no excuse for the Council not to alternatively prioritize most of its efforts on investigating and exposing human rights violations by the least free, least open and most oppressive regimes in the world. Victims of human rights violations in those countries have no recourse to the media or the courts, and they have no voice or hope other than the efforts of the Council

It will require moral clarity in order to repair the lost credibility of the United Nations. The U.N. is in desperate need of your bold and committed leadership to overcome the challenges created by the moral relativity of the past few decades. The American taxpayers contribute over \$5.3 billion a year to the U.N. Americans are compassionate and fair-minded, but their indulgence of mismanagement, secrecy, waste, and corruption can only last so much longer. As the U.S. Congress enters the FY07 appropriations cycle, I hope we can work together to achieve these preliminary reforms. Should I ever be of service to your pursuit of reform and accountability at the United Nations, please do not hesitate to call or meet with me in person.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Coburn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "C".

Chairman Tom Coburn  
Senate Subcommittee on Federal Financial  
Management, Government Information, and  
International Security